United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1568
25 January 1994

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General establishes Trust Fund to finance participation by third world observers in South African elections next April; invites Member States to contribute generously.

+ Bosnian Prime Minister, in letter to Secretary-General, asks for air strikes against Serb positions around Sarajevo; says killing of six children in city by Serb shells on Saturday humiliates international community and mocks United Nations.

+ WFP issues emergency appeal for $77 million worth of food aid for Ethiopia, saying some 4.4 million people are in need; approves emergency operations for Eritrea and Angola.

+ WHO predicts that at least 30 million people will die from tuberculosis in 1990s, citing inadequate control programmes, population growth, and spread of HIV/AIDS.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has established a Trust Fund to Finance Third World Observers to the South African Elections scheduled to take place on 27 April. The Secretary-General, who proposed the creation of the Fund in his recent report on South Africa, invited all Member States to contribute generously to it.

In his report, which was approved by the Security Council in resolution 894 (1994), the Secretary-General said the total number of international observers for the elections, including those representing foreign non-governmental organizations and other groups, would probably exceed 5,000. The United Nations would provide some 1,800 of those observers; along with observers from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the European Union, the Commonwealth and individual States, they would form a core group of almost 3,000 observers.

(more)

For information media--not an official record

* * *

The Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haris Silajdzic, has asked Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to demand air strikes against "Serb aggressor posts" around Sarajevo. In a letter to the Secretary-General dated 24 January, the Prime Minister said the killing of six children in the city by Serbian shells on Saturday humiliated the international community and mocked the dignity of the United Nations. He noted that the incident took place within a United Nations-designated "safe area" and only 200 metres away from the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) Headquarters in Sarajevo. It also came at a time when the UNPROFOR Commander for Bosnia and Herzegovina was being rotated.

The Bosnian Prime Minister charged that UNPROFOR was unable to protect innocent children in Sarajevo and asked that air strikes be authorized "in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions as well as with the conclusions of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)".

* * *

The World Food Programme (WFP) has issued an emergency appeal for Ethiopia, estimating that some 4.4 million people there will need food aid this year. Erratic rainfall, shortages of farm inputs and plant pests have significantly reduced the country's harvests, and could lead to widespread food shortages and even localized famine later in the year. The WFP appealed for a range of foodstuffs, including 150,000 metric tons of wheat, costing an estimated $77 million.

In a related development, the WFP warned that two thirds of Eritrea's population of 2.3 million people will also face severe food shortages this year. The country's food production has fallen sharply recently because of of crop failure and a shortage of pasture for livestock. To stave off widespread suffering in the coming months, the WFP has approved a $35 million emergency operation for the most vulnerable people. With hardly any food stocks in Eritrea, distribution in the next four or five months will have to be carried out on a "ship to mouth" basis, WFP said.

Meanwhile, the WFP has approved an emergency operation for 2.1 million people affected by war and drought in Angola. The operation, which will run from February to July, will deliver almost 170,000 metric tons of food at a cost of $85 million. The WFP noted that the figure of 2.1 million did not represent all Angolans needing food aid but those that the Programme realistically estimated it could reach.

* * *

At least 30 million people will die from tuberculosis in the 1990s, and the annual death toll is expected to reach 3.5 million by the year 2000, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The WHO declared tuberculosis a global emergency last April, saying aid agencies should spend more than $100 million a year -- seven times their current amount -- on treatment of the disease worldwide.

However, a report currently being discussed by the WHO Executive Board in Geneva says the disease is not being contained because of poor quality control programmes, population growth and other demographic changes, and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The report also warns of the growing threat of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis, particularly in developing countries where effective treatment is prohibitively expensive.

* *** *